

Vitamin B6 may reduce colon cancer risk in women

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Women with high levels of vitamin B6 in their diet seem to have a decreased risk of developing colorectal cancer -- especially those who consume alcohol -- according to a report from Sweden.

Dr. Susanna C. Larsson, from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, and colleagues analyzed data from 61,433 women in the population-based Swedish Mammography Cohort. The women were cancer-free and between 40 and 76 years of age when they enrolled, and were followed for an average of nearly 15 years.

During follow-up, 805 women were diagnosed with colorectal cancer, the team reports in the medical journal *Gastroenterology*. After taking account of age and other factors, the team found that the greater the long-term dietary intake of vitamin B6, the lower was the risk of colorectal cancer.

Overall, women with the highest level of vitamin B6 intake were 34 percent less likely to develop colorectal cancer than women with the lowest level.

The effect was even more pronounced among women who consumed two or more alcoholic drinks per week. Among these women, the difference in colon cancer risk between the highest and lowest intakes of vitamin B6 was 72 percent.

"Inadequate vitamin B6 status may lead to the development of cancerous polyps in the colon, so it is important for women to maintain a normal to high intake of vitamin B6," Larsson said in a statement. The findings may be particularly important for women who consume alcohol, she added.

SOURCE: *Gastroenterology*, June 2005.